

University of Oklahoma College of Law University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons

American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899

1-13-1891

Letter from the Secretary of the Interior,
transmitting, proceedings of a convention in Alaska
relative to certain legislative needs of the territory

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/indianserialset>



Part of the [Indian and Aboriginal Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

S. Exec. Doc. No. 39, 51st Cong., 2nd Sess. (1891)

This Senate Executive Document is brought to you for free and open access by University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899 by an authorized administrator of University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact darinfox@ou.edu.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

TRANSMITTING,

Proceedings of a convention in Alaska relative to certain legislative needs of the Territory.

JANUARY 13, 1891.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, January 13, 1891.

SIR: I inclose for the information of the Senate a copy of the proceedings of a convention recently held in the Territory of Alaska, which convened October 8, 1890, to consider certain legislative needs of that Territory. The suggestions made are of a very important character, and I recommend them to the careful consideration of the Senate.

Very respectfully,

JOHN W. NOBLE,
Secretary.

The PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE.

PROCEEDINGS OF TERRITORIAL CONVENTION OF ALASKA.

Pursuant to a call for that purpose, the people of Alaska met in a Territorial convention at the Opera House in Juneau on the 8th day of October, A. D. 1890, at 10 o'clock a. m. C. F. De Pue, of Silver Bow Basin, was chosen temporary chairman, and R. P. Nelson, of Juneau, temporary secretary.

A committee of five on credentials, was, on motion, appointed by the chair, and the convention took a recess until 2 o'clock p m.

At the adjourned hour the convention reassembled, and the report of the committee on credentials, showing a representation of forty delegates from nineteen precincts of the Territory, was adopted, and Col. R. D. Crittenden, of Wrangell, was chosen permanent chairman, and R. P. Nelson and F. E. Howard permanent secretaries, of the convention.

On motion, Messrs. John J. Haley, of Chilkat; R. D. Crittenden, of Wrangell; A. K. Delaney and John F. Maloney, of Juneau, and J. T. Turner, of Douglass City, were appointed a committee to prepare and present to the convention a memorial to Congress for such legislation as the needs of the Territory demand; and the convention then adjourned until 7 o'clock in the evening.

At 7 o'clock p. m. the convention was called to order, and Mr. Delaney in behalf of the committee presented for the consideration of the convention the following:

MEMORIAL.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled:

The people of Alaska, assembled in convention without regard to party affiliations and seeking only the rights, privileges, and immunities guaranteed to American citizens elsewhere throughout the jurisdiction of the United States, respectfully invite your attention to the following facts concerning our condition:

We are denied representation in Congress.

Our jurisprudence is a distortion. The act of Congress of May 17, 1884, known as the "organic act," by extending to this Territory, without specification, the general laws of the State of Oregon, many of which are inadapted to our condition and totally at variance from our requirements, has bequeathed to us a jurisprudence hopelessly entailed with ambiguity and confusion.

Our judicial system is faulty, in that the rights of appeal and of the writ of error are abridged; and it is insufficient as to the number and jurisdiction of inferior tribunals, all of which renders the administration of justice unstable, uncertain, and long delayed.

We have no title to the lots and tracts of land upon which we have erected our business houses and builded our homes, and the right to acquire such title by purchase, preëmption, and homestead, a right enjoyed elsewhere by our fellow citizens and deemed inestimable by the American people, is denied to us.

We have no voice in the management or control of the public schools in which our children are being educated.

We have neither local self-government nor the means whereby it may be established.

The prohibitory liquor law is so obnoxious that it commands neither obedience from the citizens nor enforcement by the authorities.

Our postal service is inefficient and totally inadequate to meet the growing wants of a progressive and enterprising people.

Our most populous town is without Government buildings necessary for the transaction of public business, and those in other localities are crumbling into decay.

We therefore respectfully memorialize Congress to grant us such early and appropriate legislation as will secure us the following:

First. A Delegate in Congress, to be chosen by the people.

Second. A code of laws adapted to our condition and demanded by our necessities, or in lieu thereof an act clearly and specifically defining which among the statutes of Oregon shall be extended over and made applicable to Alaska.

Third. Changes in judicial system, so as to provide that appeals and writs of error may be prosecuted from the district court of Alaska to the United States circuit court of Oregon, and, in the manner and in such cases as now provided by law, from such circuit court to the Supreme Court of the United States; and also increasing the number and enlarging the jurisdiction of the United States commissioners.

Fourth. Laws providing for the surveying and platting of town sites and opening the lots of any such town sites now or hereafter so surveyed and platted, to purchase by actual and bona fide settlers, reserving to all who may have occupied and improved any such lots the prior right of such purchase.

Fifth. Provisions whereby title may be acquired to cannery sites and fishing stations, and opening the agricultural, grazing, and timber lands of the Territory to purchase, preëmption and homestead, under such restrictions, however, as will preserve from the grasp of speculators, syndicates, and corporations, and secure to actual and bona fide settlers and residents of the Territory that heritage of the people, the public lands.

Sixth. Aside from a Territorial board and superintendent of education, having general supervision of the public schools of the Territory, we submit that the immediate management of such schools, especially in the more populous settlements, should be placed in the hands of local boards of trustees, chosen by the people of each town and village respectively, and having the powers usually exercised by similar boards in the States and other Territories of the Union.

Seventh. Provisions for the establishment of municipal government by the people of such towns and villages as may desire it.

Eighth. The repeal of the prohibitory liquor law and the substitution in lieu thereof of a stringent and well-guarded license law, which shall provide for speedy and severe punishment to all who sell, give away, or in any manner furnish any intoxicating liquors or drinks to the Indians, and also providing that all moneys derived from such licenses and from fines and penalties imposed for violations of such license law shall go into the municipal treasury of the town, village, or settlement

wherein the same accrue, to be expended under direction of the local authorities for public improvements.

Ninth. The establishment of a weekly mail service between southeastern Alaska and Puget Sound and of a monthly service between southeastern Alaska and other portions of the Territory.

Tenth. A fair and reasonable appropriation for Government buildings at Juneau and for the repair of such building at Sitka and Wrangel.

Deeply conscious of the justice of our cause, and relying upon the wisdom and patriotism of Congress, we respectfully submit for your candid consideration and early action this the memorial of a pioneer people engaged in building up civilization in the wildest and most remote dominion of the Republic.

Respectfully submitted.

JOHN J. HALEY,
Chairman.
W. T. TURNER,
J. F. MALONEY,
R. D. CRITTENDEN,
A. K. DELANEY,
Committee.

The memorial was, on motion, unanimously adopted.

On motion, the convention proceeded to designate its choice for a representative to bear the wishes of the convention to Washington, and after a vote of 29 for James Carroll and 11 for G. W. Garside, Mr. Carroll was declared the choice of the convention; after which the following resolution was adopted:

Resolved by this convention, That the House of Representatives be asked to accord a seat in that body to the nominee of this convention, James Carroll, in case a law be passed allowing Alaska a Delegate in Congress.

On motion, the convention then adjourned *sine die*.

R. D. CRITTENDEN,
Chairman.
R. P. NELSON,
FRANK E. HOWARD,
Secretaries.